

State attorney general at Yuma crime forum

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Gang violence. Drug use. Illegal immigration. Identify theft.

Those were the main crime concerns on the minds of citizens who attended the Yuma Crime and Fraud Prevention Forum Thursday night.

The forum was hosted by Arizona Attorney General Terry Goddard. It was modeled after events he has held across the state.

He was joined by a local panel: Yuma Mayor Larry Nelson, Yuma Police Chief Robby Robinson, Yuma County Sheriff Ralph Ogden and Yuma County Attorney Jon Smith.

The panel took questions from a full house at the Board of Supervisors Auditorium and from callers watching at home.

The first issue raised was illegal immigration.

Nelson said Yuma was "not a sanctuary city" but it was important to make it easier for immigrants here legally to work. He said he was working with the U.S. Consulate Office near Nogales to make document processing easier.

He also commended the work of the U.S. Border Patrol and mentioned the recent death of Senior Patrol Agent Luis Aguilar, who was hit by a smuggling vehicle in January. "(Border Patrol) is literally laying their lives on the line, not unlike our military," Nelson said.

The forum also touched on gang violence and the recent homicide in the Yuma Palms Regional Center.

"Local gangs have become more sophisticated, more organized," Robinson said.

Organized crime has also increased the incidences of drug production, particularly methamphetamines, and identify theft. Goddard urged residents to contact local law enforcement to find out how to protect themselves.

The panel stressed that the way they got things done locally was to work together.

"None of us have the whole answer for a community problem," Goddard said.
"But we work together in order to be as effective as possible in using public resources."